



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Response to the Report by the Head
of the OSCE Mission to Georgia,
Ambassador Roy Steven Reeve**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 29, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Reeve to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report on the situation in Georgia. We commend Ambassador Reeve and his staff for their excellent work on a wide range of difficult issues.

Ambassador Reeve,

Since your last report to the Permanent Council in March 2006, much has happened in Georgia and the region. It has been a tense and difficult year, and we commend you for your hard work in leading the mission to face these challenges successfully. We thank you for your efforts to consolidate progress in areas of the human dimension such as democratic and police reform, as well as to address security challenges that would threaten to undermine that progress. With regards to your mission's highest priority, the South Ossetia conflict, some things, like the launch of the economic rehabilitation program following a successful meeting of donors in Brussels, have encouraged hopes of bringing the two sides closer together through economic cooperation.

We note that the mission has reported that it felt constrained by the increased Georgian reservations about the existing negotiating framework and composition of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces in the Georgia-Ossetian conflict regulation process. In addition, we understand that the Mission believes the so-called "Presidential elections" and "referenda" in South Ossetia further constrained the mission's work since these events resulted in the decline of constructive engagement between the sides. Although these constraints may have created a difficult working environment, the United States asks the mission not to be discouraged.

The United States commends the mission for promoting a more dynamic conflict-settlement process. We especially recognize the Mission's support of the economic rehabilitation projects in South Ossetia and its promotion of demilitarization and security in the region.

The Mission proved its ability to defuse tensions by playing a key mediating role immediately following the arrest of four Russian officers in Tbilisi last fall. The Mission helped prevent a tense situation from escalating out of control.

We condemn the unwarranted sanctions adopted by the Russian Federation against Georgia and their economic, political and humanitarian consequences. We again urge the Russian Federation to lift these sanctions.

We also call on Russia to play a more positive role in the conflict settlement process. We note again that Russia's continuing reception of separatist leaders to Russia and according them and their so-called "republics" the same status as if they were legitimate leaders of recognized states undermine Georgia's territorial integrity and Russia's own role as an impartial mediator for the conflicts within Georgia.

In light of the recent violent events in both the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, now is the time to intensify our efforts to resolve the conflicts and help create a stable, unified Georgia—within its internationally-recognized borders—that accords the full protection of its laws to all Georgian citizens, regardless of their ethnicity. The events I refer to are unfortunately familiar to all of us, I believe: the March 11 nighttime helicopter attack of several buildings and villages in the Georgian-controlled upper Kodori valley in Georgia's Abkhazia region and the brutal execution-style murders of two Georgian police officers near the administrative boundary between Georgian-controlled and separatist-controlled parts of South Ossetia. The United States Government condemns these violent acts and sincerely hopes that ongoing investigations will uncover the perpetrators of these senseless attacks and that those perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Mr. Chairman,

These recent destabilizing attacks underscore the need for confidence and security building measures in the region. We reiterate our support for an increase in the number of OSCE monitors in the OSCE Georgia mission with true, unfettered access to carry out their mission across all of South Ossetia. In the framework of demilitarization and effective location of checkpoints, we urge establishment of a permanent JPKF-OSCE checkpoint at the village of Didi Gupta. Finally, we call for joint Georgian-Russian-OSCE monitoring of the Roki tunnel. It is vital for the Georgian government to be able to exercise its sovereign right to control traffic crossing into Georgian territory over an international border. Border security is a fundamental component of regional stability. We believe firmly that these three simple measures can help contribute immensely to the stabilization of the South Ossetia region and contribute to a speedier resolution of a conflict that—as we witnessed last weekend—is claiming too many lives.

The United States reiterates its strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity and for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions within Georgia's internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Chairman, we again thank Ambassador Reeve for his thorough report. As Ambassador Reeve moves into his final year heading the OSCE mission in Georgia, we wish him all the best and offer our full support in his endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.